

“It is essential that there should be organization of labor. This is an era of organization. Capital organizes and therefore labor must organize.”
~ Theodore Roosevelt

Ashland Free Press

Rogue Valley Social Justice News

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Rogue Valley Is RAW on Walmart

By Jason Houk

Rogue Valley residents are concerned about the negative impact the new South Medford Walmart Super Center will have on the community, and are organizing to make a change. Medford Residents Against Walmart (RAW) is a new group of local business owners, Walmart employees, community organizations, faith leaders and union members who have united in a growing campaign to bring attention to the negative impacts of Walmart on our local economy and to encourage shoppers to choose locally owned business alternatives.

In a recent report critical of Walmart, the City University of New York's Hunter College Center for Community Planning concludes, "The overwhelming weight of the independent research on the impact of Walmart stores ... shows that Walmart depresses area wages and labor benefits ... pushes out more retail jobs than it creates, and results in more retail vacancies."

Another study at Loyola University that tracked

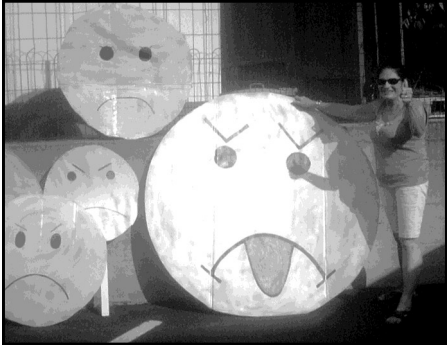
the economic effect that a West Side Chicago Wal-Mart had on a local community found that within two years, 82 local businesses had closed their doors.

Still another report, "The Effects of Walmart on Local Labor Markets," finds that "for every two jobs Wal-Mart 'creates,' three local jobs are destroyed."

Rogue Valley residents have long struggled to hold Walmart accountable to the concerns of the community. In 2010, the Oregon Supreme Court ruled in favor of Walmart, ending a six-year struggle with local residents concerned over traffic and land use issues.

Medford resident and RAW activist Ivend Holen said of the ruling, "It just doesn't make good sense that Walmart should be allowed to create traffic gridlock near the South Gateway and dump the costs of fixing it all on the backs of the taxpayer."

Medford residents worry what the impact of almost 9,000 additional car trips per day in the already congested South Medford I-5 Interchange area.



RAW activists prepare faces for Wednesday's action.

Construction has recently been completed on the 176,500-square-foot store adjacent to the South Gateway Shopping Center at the old Miles Field baseball park off South Pacific Highway in South Medford. Walmart plans a grand opening on August 15th. Walmart will be permanently closing the

Residents tell Walmart: "We Cannot Afford You!"

Talent Walmart on that day and also closing the North Medford Walmart for remodeling.

On August 15, RAW members will hold a press conference and rally during the store's grand opening to bring attention to the negative impacts of Walmart's policies and call for an end to the "Walmartization" of local jobs.

Wednesday's event will begin with a press conference at 5:00 PM and a rally at 5:30 PM. During the rally, speakers will call on Walmart to stop its cycle of impoverishing communities and encourage shoppers to choose local alternatives to Walmart. The rally and press conference will coincide with Walmart's scheduled grand opening that same day.

For more information about the rally and participation in RAW call Wes Brain, at 541-482-6988.

US Dept. of Labor to Walmart's Fish Supplier: Unfair Labor Practices are Rotten

By Vanessa Houk

Mega retail chain Walmart has a laundry list of bad practices including selling goods made in sweatshops, using vendors who engage in human trafficking, and keeping US workers underemployed and underinsured. Walmart stores ship in goods from thousands of miles away so as the new Supercenter is opening up, Rogue Valley residents should learn about some of the unfair labor practices that Walmart is known for. In Louisiana, a crawfish processing facility, CJ's Seafood, was recently ordered to pay nearly a quarter of a million dollars in fines and unpaid wages when the US Department of Labor took action in July. The Wages and Hour Division (WHD) found that guest workers were forced to work overtime for no pay, were threatened with physical violence if they didn't work faster, received substandard wages and worked in a plant that was found to have 11 serious health and safety violations.

Walmart conducted their own investigation of CJ's in early June and said that they found no proof of wrongdoing. Megan Murphy, a Walmart spokeswoman, said in an emailed statement: "Following our investigation, as well as investigations by the Department of Labor and OSHA, at this time we are unable to substantiate claims of forced labor or human trafficking at CJ Seafood."

The safety violations included having a blocked exit, not covering electrical outlets and not being equipped with fire extinguishers and exit signs. The labor department found that CJ's violated the temporary foreign workers program by not paying workers the minimum wage, not paying overtime and for misrepresenting the need for these workers. The H-2B visa program has specific guidelines which must be met.

An organizer for the National Guest Worker Alliance reported that his group received a call from a worker who was here under the H-2B visa program who said they had been forced to work 15

to 24 hour shifts. Jacob Horwitz said that the guest worker reported that employees were not being paid for time worked, they were locked in the plant, and

"The Wages and Hour Division found that guest-workers were forced to work overtime for no pay, were threatened with physical violence if they didn't work faster, received substandard wages and worked in a plant that was found to have 11 serious health and safety violations."

threatened with physical harm to their families back in Mexico if they complained to authorities.

An under-reported part of the guest-worker program is that workers pay recruiters in their own countries who promise them high wages. Most come to the US already in great debt and then are stuck working in substandard conditions to try to earn back the money they spent coming here in the first place.

Labor Organizer Murdered Despite Repeated Appeals to Walmart for Intervention

via Making Change at Walmart

The body of a prominent labor organizer in Bangladesh's garment industry was found last week after he was tortured and killed. Aminul Islam worked for improved standards and fair wages for his country's garment workers in his leadership role in the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity (BCWS).

After arrest and repeated harassment, BCWS leader Kalpona Akter presented Walmart CEO Mike Duke with a petition signed by hundreds of thousands of supporters last year at Walmart's annual shareholders' meeting. The petition explicitly asked Walmart to protect Aminul Islam, urging Walmart to "tell [their] suppliers that have instigated false charges against Kalpona Akter, Babul Akhter, Aminul Islam, and other labor leaders that those charges must be dropped; that the officers responsible for torturing these individuals must be held accountable; and that labor rights defenders like the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity

must be allowed to operate freely." As one of the largest single purchasers of Bangladesh-made garments (\$1 billion annually), BCWS leaders insist that Walmart can have a major impact on labor discussions within Bangladesh.

In late March, Akter appeared on ABC News to again ask Walmart and other major companies for their protection. Unfortunately, the appeals seem to have been to no avail.

Local Police Chief Mahbulul Haq told AFP that Islam's, "legs had severe torture marks including a hole made by a sharp object. All his toes were broken."

Aminul Islam will be remembered for his hard work in promoting the rights of some of the most exploited workers globally that often find themselves working in dangerous work conditions with pay only slightly more than a dollar a day.

Scott Nova, executive director of the Worker Rights Consortium told ABC News report, "All indications are that Aminul Islam was murdered because of his labor rights work."

Kudos to the Ashland City Council

By Andy Seles

Kudos to the Ashford City Council for passing a ballot measure that, in November, would allow Ashland Citizens to weigh in on the Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United decision.

Because of the daily media reports on the obscene amounts of campaign contributions flowing into the political campaigns (much of it financing the negative ads of both parties) more and more citizens are becoming aware that something is drastically wrong with our current election process. What they may not be aware of is that there is a non-partisan citizen group right here in the valley, Jackson County Move to Amend (www.MoveToAmendJacksonCounty.org) that seeks, along with affiliate groups across the nation,

to overturn the Citizens United decision via a constitutional amendment. Such an amendment would state unequivocally that the inalienable rights belong to human beings only (not to corporations, unions, non-profits, LLCs or multi-national corporations) and that money is not a form of protected free speech under the First Amendment. I am grateful to the City Council, especially Carol Voisin and to the "grey panthers" at Mountain Meadows, especially John Tyler, who advocated getting the ballot measure approved. Anything worth fighting for takes time and persistent effort. You can support the effort by coming to the next Jackson County Move to Amend meeting on Saturday, August 25 from 9-11 a.m. at the Medford Library and/or just educating yourself on this important issue before voting in November.



Ashland Food Coop Union Election Nears

By Jason Houk

ASHLAND FOOD CO-OP OWNERS AND SHOPPERS – AFC workers need your support!

In June, 2011, workers at the Ashland Food Co-op began a union drive to join UFCW Local 555 so that they can have a stronger voice in the policies that govern their workplace. This is not a struggle for higher wages, but is a fight for mutual respect and a truly democratic workplace that values its workers' collective voice.

The workers at Ashland Food Co-op have the federally protected right to a union election that is free of harassment and intimidation from management and other employees. Management at the Co-op broke federal law when they intimidated and retaliated against these employees. According to complaints, Co-op management has acted heavily handedly against organizers and workers. The National Labor Relations Board agreed and sanc-

tioned the Co-op for 13 complaints of unfair labor practices. This legal process is now over and a union vote has finally been announced. Ashland Food Co-op workers in the voting unit will have the opportunity on August 23 and 24 to finally make their vote count.

Right now power at the coop is held by management. Any rights and voice the workers have in the form of staff council can be withdrawn at any time. Hopefully workers will find the courage to vote for their best interests and will vote for the union.

Co-op owners and community members are showing their support by hanging window signs calling for "a lasting voice for workers at the Ashland Food Co-op." Owners have been standing with workers to hold the Co-op accountable since the union campaign began. If you would like a window sign to show your solidarity, make your request at the website: justiceforcoopworkers.com.

By Vanessa Houk

The Ashland Chamber of Commerce installed three donation boxes in an effort to curb panhandling in June. By late July, after they discovered Henry Boswell allegedly using a wire instrument to remove money from one of the donation boxes, police arrested Boswell and charged him with theft. During that time it came out that the Chamber had not yet counted the money donated, but that police suspected Boswell of allegedly taking a small amount of cash.

Previously the Ashland Chamber of Commerce said that donations will go to St. Vincent de Paul with the intention that it will help prevent homelessness. Critics say that the money collected is not likely to help those who are already on the street. There are no reports on how much money has been collected in Ashland as of this printing.

Right around the same time the donation boxes went up in Ashland, another city offered the same solution. In Lawrence, Kansas, six meters were placed throughout the downtown. Lawrence is

about four times the size of Ashland with a population of 87,000 residents. For the month of June about \$51 was collected which will go to a local homeless shelter there.

Currently there are no resources for Ashland's homeless other than some free meals around town. The UCC Church has suspended their shower and breakfast program for the time being.

On Tuesday August 21 from 4:00 to 5:30 pm, the community is invited to Uncle Foods Diner (175 N. Main Street, Ashland) for a fundraiser and meal. Organizers are hoping to raise enough money to buy a new grill which will be used for grilled vegetables. The Tuesday night community meal is a free weekly event sponsored by Peace House.

In September members of Dignity Village will be visiting Ashland and will share information about their program. More information about that event will be printed in an upcoming issue of AFP.

The next Homelessness Coalition meeting will be on August 30 at 2:00 pm in the Gresham Room of the Ashland Library.

"You can either practice being right or practice being kind." ~ Anne Lamott



WILPF Vigil Inspires Warm Memories

By Vanessa Houk

I grew up in a household where a box of chicken Rice-a-Roni was the heart of a good meal, but that didn't matter because on holidays I could always count on Aunt Aiko to show up with homemade yeast rolls. She would roll up her sleeves and get ready to make mashed potatoes from scratch. She'd show me how to create little rivulets of butter and milk in the cut-up, peeled and boiled russets. I've been thinking of Aiko a lot this week ever since I spent a few hours at the Hiroshima-Nagasaki vigil in the Ashland Plaza and how grateful I am that the world feels so small to me.

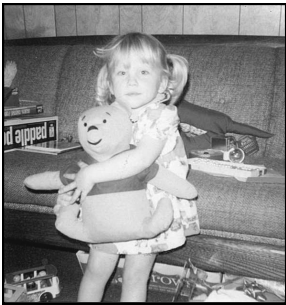
My aunt and uncle's home was a safe ground for me back in the day and so shortly after my dad died last summer, we went back for a visit. Walking through the door of their ranch style house was like being transported back to 1975. I looked around the living room and it was as if everything

was just as it always had been, down to the old RCA television in the corner. How comforting it was, in the middle of that grief, to stand there and feel like a kid again, even if only for a few seconds. And if their home was safe ground, Aunt Aiko's kitchen was my church. A long, rectangular, solid oak table was always covered with a linen tablecloth; holiday or middle-of-the-week work Wednesday, meals were served on heavy china plates as if living was enough of a reason to celebrate. "Sit down," she'd say so we could all see the ball game that was on in the living room. The sound of sports announcers and the cheers of the crowds are as imprinted in my soul as the taste of those warm rolls.

Sitting on the edge of the plaza with members of WILPF (Womens International League of Peace and Freedom) last Tuesday, listening to the rhythmic drumming of Whistling Elk, the warm August wind blowing through the middle of the way, my mind kept jumping to my own family as I was surrounded by the tall educational maze that twisted

around the grassy sections of the plaza. On August 6th, 1945, the US military dropped a nuclear bomb on the city of Hiroshima which was followed by a second bomb on Nagasaki just three days later. World War Two was ending, but for many Japanese people the destruction would be felt for many decades. An estimated 90,000 people lost their lives from the Hiroshima bombing and nearly 74,000 in Nagasaki. Hundreds of thousands of people suffered from burns, the effects of radiation and related sicknesses.

All these years and I've never asked Aiko about any of this. I wonder what she thought about it, how



she felt? Back then I never considered what she had to give up to be a part of our family. I wonder if it was hard for her as a young wife after the war, trying to adjust to life in a new country. I worry that she faced moments of racism in their small Northern California town. By the time I was born she was such a central part of our family and one of my own role models. She's in her mid-eighties now, healthy but for trouble with her sight and these days she and Uncle Bill are still watching ball games together, only now on a brand new giant television. She spends her time sewing incredible quilts and up until recently crocheting. There are hundreds of homeless people in her community who wear her handmade hats and scarfs in the winter months, each one bright and colorful and made with love.

Back in the plaza, strings of a thousand colorful paper origami peace cranes hung from our booth and were caught by the wind just like the dandelion wishes I used to make in Aunt Aiko's front yard, reminding me once again how small the world is.

Southern Oregon Labor Day Picnic

Here comes Labor Day and Southern Oregon's FREE barbecue picnic for working people.

Our Southern Oregon Central Labor Council is organizing this year's Labor Day Barbecue Picnic for the working class. This year continues to honor the enormous contributions of working people and celebrates our victories and success in the year ahead.

The Labor Day Picnic will be Monday, September 3rd, at Tou Velle State Park, 8425 Table Rock Road, Central Point. The fun begins at 11:00 am with speakers and music. Lunch will be served from 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm. Great Music and tunes will carry us through until 4pm. Mickey Balloon-man will entertain kids young and old.

The free lunch includes hamburgers, veggie burgers and hot dogs and will be served by members of UFCW, the United Food and Commercial Workers.

Admission is free, but be prepared to pay the State Park's parking fee of \$5. Bring lawn chairs as picnic table space is limited.

Which side are you on?
Corporations vs. Working People.
Southern Oregon Central Labor Council Labor Day Picnic and Barbecue

This annual event is organized by the Southern Oregon Central Labor Council, Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice and local labor unions.

For more information, contact Wes Brain at 541-482-6988, brain@mind.net.

By Karen Jeffery

JINTEROS, MUSIC, & ART

We learn about jinteros¹ our first day in country. The evening after landing in Havana, Peter journeys out for a bottle of rum ('ron') to mix with a couple of colas and limes found in our room's fridge. There's a large rooftop with great vistas over Habana Vieja, so it must be happy hour. Margot tells him there is a shop around the corner, but between the casa and the shop a pedi-cab peddler stops to ask if he wants a ride. When Pete explains he is just going around the corner, the young Habanero offers to take him for free. "I'm going that way anyway." Blocks away, heading past Parc Centrale, he tells Pete his friend has rum at better prices than the shops. But the ride would still be free. An hour later Pete returns back to the casa, leaping upstairs for money, since the pedi-driver will not release his \$20 rum without payment of \$10 for the ride. Grateful he wasn't knifed and burgled in the seamy section of Central Havana where they ended up and that he only overpaid by \$27 for his first bottle of rum, he remembers the blog warnings about jinteros and street hustlers. Kathy and I get a good laugh out of it all.

And by mid-morning two days later, we find ourselves hustled as well. We are heading up to Obispo Street when a lovely young family (couple in their twenties, pushing a baby in a stroller) greets us with the usual "where you from?" We stop to chat and, being two abuelas², play with the baby. The young man mentions that his uncle (of Buena Vista Social Club fame)³ is playing a gig at that moment, and Kathy perks up. A professional musician herself (and conga player), she takes the hook. The restaurant is only a few blocks out of our way anyway. The music IS great - traditional son.⁴ Naturally we order a couple mojitos, then a couple for the couple. Alex takes my hand, leading me to the dance floor for some salsa, after which Alex's 'grandfather', famed BVSC piano player, joins us at our table. Naturally we buy him a mojito and fall into a discussion about Afro-Latin rhythms. Later, eager to continue our original plan to get up to Parc Central, we call for the check, "la cuenta por favor", only to realize we are being charged four to five times the normal price. It was then we groked the hustle was on... except for that brief moment when first approached on the street. Clearly the couple gets payment from the establishment, but they then have the nerve to double down, asking for money for formula for the baby, who can't breastfeed because of the mother's medication...

It's a \$40 hustle...and worth every peso.

It's the last time I get hustled, quickly learning the drill - say "no, gracias", don't make eye contact, and pass right by. A few days later a young man volunteers to take us to hear some great music (hadn't we heard this before?), and when I spot a contemporary dance troupe (free) in the plaza, I go my separate way. Kathy finds me minutes later, her guide having been stopped by a young policewoman for "talking to tourists" (read: hustling tourists). Then there was the gent in Plaza Delores who invited me to dinner. When I tell him I already have plans, he hands me a piece of paper with his name and address on it. "Come by later," he whispers. I'm telling the story to Kathy and Peter over dinner, and we all crack up when they ask "quanto questa?" Lonely Planet is right - Cubans have honed the hustle to an art form. Kathleen, unfortunately, never learns, continuing



in parks and public squares, in restaurants and paladars.⁵ A woman pulls out her guitar on a bus to Trinidad. A classically-trained flamenco guitarist makes dinner at an 'Italian' paladar palatable. Each makes my sojourn enchanting. Collectively, they make up the rhythmic undercurrent of Cuba.

In Trinidad, La Trova⁶ (where tourists stumble over salsa lessons

by locals, to multiple bands) and House of Musica (with its outdoor amphitheater, son of son, African rhythms, and full moon) are trip favorites. OK, and the dance-off Andri (son of a Puerto Padre casa owner) and my son have one late afternoon after too much rum. It is a riot of salsa, bootie-shaking, dirty dancing, breaking, hip-hop, and timba...on testosterone. When Andri wins, he takes his wife to the dance floor, and we all are wowed.

Then there's the art. Street artists, like musicians, draw, paint, sculpt, print, mime, dance, and origami in every plaza and park, every famous square. Galleries and shops exhibit oils, watercolors, acrylics, charcoals, stunning photography. We enjoy watching artists create at 'taller' experimental studios, honing their craft. They invite us to play. The art is colorful and fun and looks Picassoesque. Or maybe late Gauguin. It's Cubalism. It's political satire. It's revolutionary.

I stroll into a sidestrete gallery in Baracoa, at the far eastern end of the island, and am transported. Cubalism, flavored by local native Taino history and the culture of the revolution (Che ala Baracoa). The student introduces me to Mildo Matos, the artist, and for the duration of my stay, I photograph artists and their work, interviewing them in studios and shops.

In a socialist country where peoples' basic needs are met (food, housing, education, healthcare, childcare), art, music, dance, and culture flourish. I wonder what my country would be capable of if so many weren't scrambling daily to pay the bills, if we weren't all in debt to banks, landlords and student loans. If our market fundamentalism hadn't worked to create systemic inequality, burdening the 99% so deeply. The freedom to create is palpable and insistent.

NOTES:
¹ Welcome to the land of the jintero or tout, a profession raised to an art form by the Cubans." Lonely Planet, Cuba (6th edition)
² Grandmothers
³ Rent the movie: Buena Vista Social Club
⁴ Son - a Cuban music style, made popular again by the Buena Vista Social Club
⁵ Paladars are privately owned restaurants, fairly new to the revolution, and almost always better than government ones.
⁶ Every town has its Trova, providing a mixture of popular national music along with traditions of the province.
Look for previous accounts in past issues. Watch for Part 5 in Issue 17 of the Ashland Free Press.

Watch for the Activist Community Calendar in the upcoming Sept. 3rd edition. Email your announcements and events to ashlandfreepress@activist.com or call the AFP hotline, 541-622-9483.



KSKQ's Massive Yard Sale & Waffle Fest!

August 25th, breakfast starts at 7:30 AM. Waffles will be served until 10:30 AM and the yard sale ends at 3:00 PM.

This is a fundraising event to help KSKQ meet expenses and stay on the air.

KSKQ 89.5 FM
330 E Hersey St #2
Ashland, OR 97520
For more information call 541-482-3999

The Ashland Free Press is Southern Oregon's source for social justice news and information. AFP is a paper for the working class. AFP aspires to be a platform for voices in the community who are not often heard. We welcome content from writers, activists, students, teachers, and beyond and we are especially seeking articles and stories which are written from a local perspective.

Our editorial policies are as follows:
Our objective is to educate the masses about social justice issues. We hope to reach as many people as possible regardless of economic status or political affiliation.
We aspire to promote positive change. Aside from education, we are looking for articles which offer some solutions. Give us a call to action. Tell us what we can do to change the status quo and you'll win our attention and admiration. Be creative and have fun and we may even ignore word counts. Articles of 400-600 words fit best.
Most importantly, we strive to do no harm. We want this publication to be accurate, thoughtful and fair.

Send submissions to :
ashlandfreepress@activist.com
or call the AFP Hotline 541-622-9483

Donating is easy. Checks can be made to "Ashland Free Press" to 258 A Street #1, Ashland, OR. 97520 . Connect with us at ashlandfreepress@activist.com or call 541-622-9483.

Immigration Event
Sponsored by RVUUF Social Justice & Action Committee
Sunday, August 19, 6:30 p.m.,
Rogue Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 87 Fourth Street, Ashland

Peg Bowden, former Director of the Jackson County Nursing Department, will be visiting us in the valley again from Arizona. She has kindly consented to present her work with the Samaritans, a nonprofit volunteer group working with migrants on the border of Arizona and Mexico. She will be sharing her experiences with us. She will relate personal stories of immigrants, both those trying to enter the United States and those who are dumped at the border by ICE.

Occupy Ashland Presents THRIVE Movie Night @ Peace House!

Occupy Ashland Movie Night is the third Friday of every month. Come join us for education and discussion. Doors open at 6:30 PM and the movie start at 7 p.m. Peace House is at 543 S. Mountain Ave, in Ashland.

• August 17th: Thrive

For more information: occupyashland@gmail.com.

Save Our Community Foreclosure and Debt Rally

All three Jackson County Commissioner candidates are confirmed to attend Saturday's rally.

August 18th from 6pm - 9pm
1801 E. Jackson (UCC Church fellowship room)

Don't miss this chance to meet with candidates for Jackson County Commissioner in Medford this Saturday. Candidates running for Jackson County Commissioner have been invited to take your questions on how they will handle the foreclosure issue and lost revenues in Jackson County due to bank mortgage practices.

Also learn about new developments such as a recent court victory that is changing how, and potentially how many, foreclosures are done in Oregon.

Find out what can we do to hold big banks accountable, stop foreclosure and build strong local economies that work for Main Street, not just Wall Street.

Questions or to RSVP email :
Amanda@ProjectReconomy.org

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